



The Notebook

By **Laurie Lande** March 14, 2011

OPINION, SCHOOLS

## BHUSD Faces More Layoffs

In order to comply with a new state directive, the district is issuing potential layoff notices to teachers, counselors and one district administrator. The Beverly Hills Unified School District is sending potential layoff notices Monday to at least a dozen teachers and school counselors, as well as one district administrator.

The notices are being sent in accordance with a California state budget committee directive issued last week that requires **basic aid** (<http://beverlyhills.patch.com/articles/basic-aid-funding-explained>) school districts to make additional cuts to their 2011-12 budgets. The directive says these districts need to increase their "fair share" reduction from 5.8 percent to 8.9 percent of their annual spending, which means that BHUSD must add an additional \$1 million in cuts to next year's budget.

Because basic aid districts receive more money through property taxes than non-basic aid districts, the former must pay their "fair share" to the state through a reduction in state funding. Beverly Hills became a basic aid district last year.

At a special meeting Friday, Board of Education members accepted the BHUSD staff recommendation to issue "reduction in force" [RIF] notices to personnel accounting for 12.7 teachers and counselors. The number is uneven because some of the roles possibly being eliminated are part-time.

The RIF notices represent possible cuts because the state education law requires that staff be told of potential layoffs by March 15; actual layoff notices must be issued by May 15.

"We will work hard between now and May 15 to reduce these RIFs," board Vice President Brian Goldberg told the audience of community members and teachers, many of whom were visibly upset.

There was vigorous debate after Goldberg suggested that the board also RIF Director of Adult Education Pat Escalante to show that the administration also is taking a potential hit. He said her duties could be carried out by other staff members if necessary.

Board member Steven Fenton initially opposed the RIF to Escalante, but agreed to it only after Goldberg sided with Fenton's suggestion that the board also RIF two counselors at the K-8 schools.

At its Feb. 22 board meeting, the board majority **voted to cut** (<http://beverlyhills.patch.com/articles/bhUSD-avoids-some-cuts-to-special-ed>) seven teaching and counseling positions as well as six maintenance and operations staff positions in order to reduce BHUSD's \$53 million budget by \$1.14 million. Those RIFs have probably already been issued.

Board members were unified Friday in stating that they did not want to implement additional cuts and were only doing so in accordance with the state's instruction. All four board members present—Jake Manaster was out of town and unreachable—voted to accept the final compromise issuing RIF notices to 12.7 staff equivalents plus the administrator position and the two K-8 counselors.

The 14.7 positions are: three kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers; two elementary school technology teachers; two special education teachers; two counselors; one middle school music teacher; one high school math teacher; one high school counselor; the equivalent of one high school foreign language teacher; a half-time Title 1 instructor; three part-time "teacher on special assignment" reductions.

The specific teachers and schools that will be affected has yet to be announced. The decision will be made by BHUSD administrators.

The school board members—all of whom are unpaid elected officials—are in a tough spot. They had to make these decisions with little notice and now will be under pressure from all sides to rescind many of the RIFs by May 15.

I applaud their decision to include one administrator in the RIF notices. Hopefully most of the potential layoffs will be avoided, but it is best at this stage that the board has a number of options to make any necessary budget cuts.

**What do you think of Friday's board decision? [Tell us in the comments.](#)**

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